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ABSTRACT

Publications, which can be anything from a one-page flier to a brochure to a poster or a book, can be relatively easy to create but very effective for helping to fight crime. This bulletin considers how publications can contribute to crime prevention; what it takes to start a publication; what are some of the challenges in creating a publication; how to evaluate your publication; and what some of the rewards are. The bulletin walks an individual through the publication process from researching a subject to distributing the final product. It pinpoints the following steps to keep the publication process moving forward: (1) research your subject; (2) outline your document; (3) write, edit, and rewrite your document; (4) design your publication; (5) go to press; and (6) distribute your product. (NKA)

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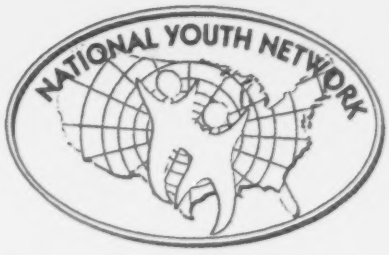

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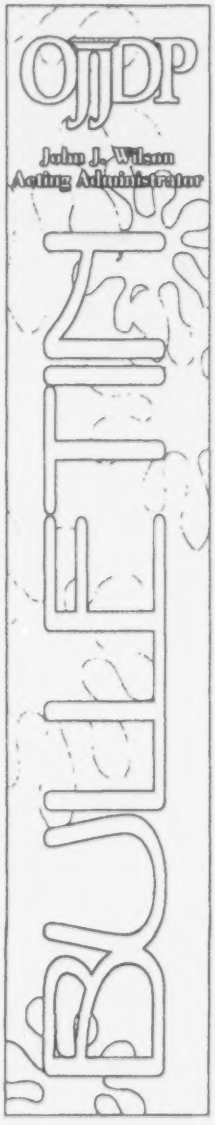

Creating Publications: Write To Fight Crime

What Are Publications?

Publications can be anything from a one-page flier to a brochure, from a poster to a book. They can be used as a support tool for a larger project or can be the main focus of a project. Publications are relatively easy to create, yet can be very effective for helping to fight crime because:

- ◇ They can be printed or photocopied more cheaply than other communications.
- ◇ They can be distributed in a large number of places.
- ◇ They allow readers to absorb information at their own pace.
- ◇ They can be used more than once.

Whatever form they take, all publications go through a development process that includes several steps.

How Can Publications Contribute to Crime Prevention?

Publications can educate, inform, and motivate. They can pass on skills, spread news, and promote ideas. They can cover any topic you choose, use a wide variety of formats, and reach individuals and areas you can't always reach personally. A flier, for example, can announce a crime prevention fair in your town. A poster can give a quick crime prevention tip by combining a short message with a powerful graphic. A brochure can help someone become streetwise. A book can guide a reader through the process of starting a mediation program in his or her school. Even though you can't be everywhere at once, your publication can be. Printed messages can be distributed at school assemblies, posted in grocery stores, or handed out at fairs and rallies. They can be found at the mall, in a doctor's office, in your home, or on the Internet.

from the administrator

Publications can inform, persuade, and motivate. As such, they are powerful tools in crime prevention efforts. This Bulletin will walk you through the publication process from researching your subject to distributing the final product. Additional resources are provided that will help you to create effective publications.

Whatever your subject, whoever your audience, a printed publication's combination of information, attractive design, and appropriate illustrations is a powerful tool against crime.

What Does It Take To Start a Publication?

Creating publications requires teamwork and meticulous planning. Half of the work has to be done before you even start to write. Planning for your publication means answering general and specific questions. Some general questions you need to answer first include:

- Is your publication a one-time product or an ongoing one, such as a monthly newsletter?
- What format do you have in mind—poster, flier, brochure, booklet, newsletter?
- Would you like your publication printed in black and white, in more than one color, on colored paper?
- Do you intend to use photographs or other graphics?
- Does your intended format fit with the needs and interests of your audience?

Once you have answered these general questions, you will need to focus on the following specifics:

- Who is the intended audience of your publication? Although the document may appeal to many people, the intended audience should be a specific group of people—a target group. The target group for a newsletter about your crime prevention organization could include the organization's members, funders, and other local supporters. Other people, such as parents of the group members and school staff and faculty, may be interested in the publication, but they are probably not the core group you want to address. For a poster on personal safety, the target group might be 9- and 10-year-olds. The poster could also educate high school students but the message should be directed at 9- and 10-year-olds.
- How many copies of the publication will you need for your audience?
- How will your readers get the publication? Will you distribute it to them or will they pick it up? Will it be for sale? If so, who will advertise it? Where will it be sold? How much will it cost? Who will handle the money? If your publication will be distributed for free, you need to know who will stock it. Where will you hand it out and what groups might include it in their mailings?
- What do you want your readers to do once they've read your publication? Try to frame the answer to this question in terms of real actions. For example, the goal that "readers over age 65 will know three ways to say no to con artists" is more specific than "older people will understand swindlers and how to stop them." Describing your goal in terms of what your audience members will be able to do (whether it's to explain, to promote, to describe, to demonstrate, or to communicate) or what they will know once they've read

Planning a Successful Project

For more information on how to plan a successful project, see the National Youth Network's Planning a Successful Crime Prevention Project. *This 28-page workbook explains the five steps of the Success Cycle:*

- *Assessing Your Community's Needs.*
- *Planning a Successful Project.*
- *Lining Up Resources.*
- *Acting on Your Plans.*
- *Nurturing, Monitoring, and Evaluating.*

The workbook includes six worksheets for you to take notes on. You can get a copy of this planning workbook from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, listed in the "Resources" section. Good luck!

your publication will ensure that you create a publication with a purpose.

- What resources, e.g., cash or services, do you need and what is already available to you? Do you have writers in your group or do you need to recruit some? Have any services, such as printing, been donated or paid for? What research is involved? What will design and printing cost? How much money should you allow for postage? How much time is required for writing, editing, and printing?

By making even rough estimates, you may learn that you need to narrow or refine your message, revise your format, or find new resources. A journalism or graphic arts teacher or local printer may be able to help you with design and printing cost estimates. Consider asking the high school print shop to produce your document, or ask the local printer to reduce costs in return for your acknowledgment of the printer's support. Think about who needs to review the document (e.g., advisor, school board, principal) and who can help with editing and proofing it. The school newspaper staff may be willing to pitch in.

With this planning completed, you have built a good foundation for a useful publication. You are now ready to create your publication!

How Do You Keep the Publication Process Moving Forward?

Once you have planned your publication, there are six critical steps to moving it forward. How much time each step will take and how important the step is in the process will depend on the document you're producing. A brief description of each step follows. You may find it helpful to talk with those familiar with producing documents such as printers, graphic designers, journalism teachers, English teachers, and school newspaper and yearbook staff. Later on, you can help others!

Step 1: Research Your Subject

One of the most important elements in creating a publication is the accuracy of your information. No matter how good your publication looks, you will lose credibility among your supporters if your information is wrong.

- Check facts and dates. Don't assume that "common knowledge" is correct. Find out what experts have to say. Use the library and the Internet; ask the school research librarian to help you.
- Whatever topic you choose to write about, there is most likely an existing organization that deals with this topic. For example, if you are writing a publication for senior citizens, get in touch with the American Association of Retired Persons chapter in your community, or if you are writing about preventing vandalism and graffiti, contact your local police department.
- Interview people who know about your subject. Check with local professional associations, your reference librarian, your friends' parents, even your own parents. Ask people you interview for additional referrals and resources.

Step 2: Outline Your Document

Outlines help save time by organizing information and listing each point that you will write about next. They will help you prevent repetition, include important information, and keep your publication focused—with a clear beginning, middle, and end. An outline does not have to be elaborate or cast in stone. For a flier about an upcoming event, the outline may be simply a checklist that includes the event's name, date, time, location, and admission charge (if any); information about tickets; and reasons that people should attend. For a 16-page booklet, you may want to get a bit more formal: your outline should have an introduction, main topics with

two or three supporting points under each, and a summary or conclusion.

Step 3: Write, Edit, and Rewrite Your Document

Writing is hard work. Whether one person writes the whole document or several people write parts of it, writing still involves effort. Some people draft documents best directly on a computer; others feel they are more creative when they write it out on paper first. Some people like to start writing with an introduction. Others like to write substantive sections first and then go back and write an introduction. Find your own style, but remember that most writers want to polish their drafts at least once before handing them to an editor—someone with excellent grammar and spelling skills and a good sense of language use!

Getting others, including members of the target audience, to review a document provides an important perspective that can help you improve your document and make it even stronger. Revise your draft based on the comments you receive. Then ask an editor to look it over and suggest any changes. You should also ask your group's adviser to review the draft. Once you've included everyone's changes, you'll want someone to proof the document for typos, spelling errors, and mistakes in dates and numbers.

Step 4: Design Your Publication

If you are preparing a flier and have some skills in layout on computer word-processing packages, you may be able to do the design yourself. However, for many documents (brochure, poster, or book), you will want more experienced help. While the computer lab at your school or a computer club in your community may offer some help on a volunteer basis, you may need to hire a professional design firm. Interview different firms, look at samples of their work, and compare their prices. Be prepared to work with the designer to help him or her understand the objectives for your publication and your ideas about its appearance. You will make many decisions together such as the colors, illustrations, photos, and type and size of font you want to use.

Whether you design the publication yourself, secure volunteer help, or hire a professional, you need to allot enough time for this stage. Depending on the publication, this stage could be a day or two or several weeks. Usually, the larger the document or the more complex the design (color photos and so on), the more time you will need. Again, a printer can usually suggest more specific guidelines for your document. In the most complicated case, the professional designer will present several ideas from which you may select one design. The designer will lay out the type; you will proof it and make corrections; and the designer will send corrected proofs for your review. Eventually you will agree on the final version.

Step 5: Go to Press

Depending on your publication and your budget, your "printer" may be as simple as a photocopying machine or as complex as a four-color press. In any case, you want to select a printer based on capability, equipment, and cost. Not all printers can produce four-color documents. Similarly, not all photocopiers will staple documents. If you need 300 stapled copies, this isn't very helpful. In addition, if a commercial printer cannot fold your brochure, you'll have to send the job elsewhere to be folded—at extra cost and time—or find volunteers to do the folding. Try to find a printer that can handle all your needs. This will cut down on cost and increase efficiency.

To find a printer, ask for recommendations from other organizations. Call around, obtain estimates, and compare prices. Make sure you receive at least three estimates in writing. You

may also want to obtain samples from printers or visit their facilities.

Be sure you clearly review with your printer how many pages your publication is, what kind of format you want, how many colors of ink it requires, what kinds of folding and delivery requirements you have, and when you need the job completed. Whichever printer you eventually choose, you will definitely want to obtain a written contract.

To reduce your printing costs, make sure that you give your printer the cleanest copy you can. That means grammar, spelling, headlines, and photos must be checked and rechecked before submission. Your printer will show you a "blueline," a final copy that allows you a last opportunity to make corrections. Changes at this stage are costly, sometimes extremely costly. Before giving the printer a final number of needed copies, recheck your figure—it's cheaper to print more the first time around than to go back and print more later.

Step 6: Distribute Your Product

One aspect of getting your publication out is creating a distribution list. If your publication is a monthly newsletter, you may want to create a computerized database. This will help you keep track of who receives your newsletter, who wants to be added to the distribution list, and who wants to be dropped from the distribution list. In addition, some printers offer mailing and distributing services.

What Are Some of the Challenges in Creating a Publication?

Figuring out the best place to start and your publication's key messages is always a challenge. It is difficult, in particular, to determine what your audience members actually need, how best to convey information to them, and whether your writing appeals to them. It may be helpful to talk with several people who are members of your target audience to get their views or even to get them together in a meeting to discuss the issue.

Another challenge is writing clearly, correctly, and effectively. Developing a document involves a great deal of hard work. You will need the help of others at every step. Publishing an error-free document is a big challenge, so much so that few documents *are* error free. However, careful planning, proofing, and selection of a printer all help to reduce your chances for error.

Your group may also face additional challenges when group members have different—but very strong—views on an issue being addressed in the publication. If your publication addresses the subject of curfews, for example, group members will have to decide whether to present both sides of the issue or argue for a particular result. When your publication takes a side on an issue, you will need to support your position with strong arguments and solid evidence to avoid having your publication appear too emotional or controversial.

What Are Some of the Rewards?

Few things feel better than watching your idea move from a newly formed thought to a published document. As a published document, your idea can now reach a large number and a wide range of people. Creating a publication also sharpens your writing, organizational, and teamwork skills. And don't forget that in the process, you have helped to prevent or reduce crime!

How Can Your Publication Be Evaluated?

Evaluating your publication can help you learn whether it has met its intended goals, but only

Six Steps to a Successful Publication Process

Remember that once you've decided to publish, there are several critical steps to moving your publication along.

- ❑ ***Research your subject.*** *To maintain your publication's credibility, check all facts and dates, consult your library or the Internet, and interview experts and organizations relevant to your topic.*
- ❑ ***Outline your document.*** *Listing the points you want to make and organizing the information you intend to present beforehand will help you save time.*
- ❑ ***Write, edit, and rewrite your document.*** *Polish your text before handing it off; documents require several drafts before they are ready for review. Make sure to get someone to edit and proofread the publication.*
- ❑ ***Design your publication.*** *Build enough time into your schedule for the design process. A clean and interesting design can only help your publication.*
- ❑ ***Go to press.*** *Select a printer based on capability, equipment, and cost. Take into account your design elements and whether your publication will be stapled or folded—all these factors contribute to cost. Get at least three printer estimates, and once you choose a printer, get a written contract.*
- ❑ ***Distribute your product.*** *Keep track of who your audience is; you may want to create a database with mailing information to make distribution a smooth process.*

if you decide at the start what you want to evaluate and how you will go about evaluating it. Evaluation helps "to answer practical questions of decision-makers and program implementors who want to know whether to continue a program, extend it to other sites, modify it, or close it down."[1] You will want to be able to show that your publication does one or all of the following:

- ◇ Reaches your target group or audience and provides important information to them.
- ◇ Delivers your crime prevention message in a way that is organized, clear, and effective.
- ◇ Uses a format and design that is appropriate for your intended audience.
- ◇ Captures the interest of people in your community with exciting graphics, original writing, or creative artwork.
- ◇ Builds your group's knowledge of the publication process—and improves writing and design skills along the way.

Because groups seldom reprint a document once it is published, evaluation should be woven into the document's development. At each stage, compare the results to the objectives and goals you initially set for your reader. Get people who are not involved in the publication process to make that comparison, too. Having reviewers from both inside and outside your group helps ensure objectivity and candor. It's also important to have your document reviewed by both experts—to make sure the information is accurate—and people with relatively little knowledge of the field—to make sure the information is clear, complete, and understandable. Building in time for this level of review is one of the best ways to "evaluate" your work.

Evaluation also can include surveying or interviewing readers after your document has been published. Find out what they liked and didn't like, whether the publication provided information that they needed, whether the layout of the document made it easy to read and understand, whether any questions they had on the subject were answered, and whether they were able to meet the goals you set for them when you developed your document.

In evaluating your publication, also consider how well it has met the following more general crime prevention goals:

- ◇ Helps in crime reduction.
- ◇ Reduces fear of crime.

[1] National Crime Prevention Council, *What, me evaluate?* Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council, 1986.

- Is cost effective.
- Has a lasting impact.
- Attracts support and resources.
- Makes people feel safe and more positive about being members of your school or community.

Learning to evaluate the things you do is a skill you can apply to all aspects of your life.[2] Good luck with your publication project and—Start writing!

[2]For more information on evaluation, pick up a copy of *Does Your Youth Program Work?*, a Youth In Action Bulletin available at no charge from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, listed in the "Resources" section.

Resources

For more information, contact one of the following organizations or visit the U.S. Department of Justice Kids Page Web site at www.usdoj.gov/kidspage. This site includes information for kids, youth, parents, and teachers. You also can check with community colleges, adult education centers, and English teachers at school for information on training and local writer's workshops.

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849–6000
800–638–8736
301–519–5212 (fax)
Internet: ojjdp.ncjrs.org

National Crime Prevention Council

1700 K Street NW., Second Floor
Washington, DC 20006–3817
202–466–6272
Internet: www.ncpc.org

Related Readings

For more information on creating a publication, check out some of these publications.

Looking Good in Print: A Guide to Basic Design for Desktop Publishing. R.C. Parker. Chapel Hill, NC: Ventura Press, Inc. 1990.

The Little, Brown Handbook. H.R. Fowler. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company. 1983.

The Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book. D. Poynter. Santa Barbara, CA: Para Publishing. 1991.

The Elements of Style. W. Strunk and E.B. White. New York, NY: Allyn and Bacon. 1995.

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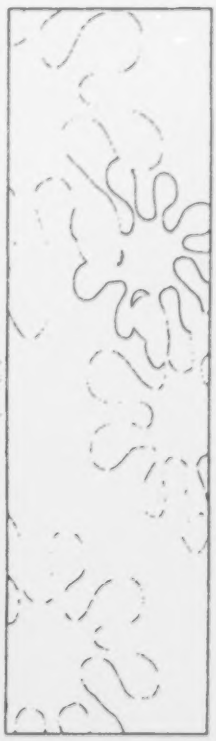

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The National Youth Network, founded and managed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, consists of diverse youth leaders from across the Nation who are sponsored by youth-serving organizations. The goal of the Network is to recognize and build upon the power and importance of youth leadership by uniting young people and adults, through communication and action, to enable youth organizations and nonaffiliated youth to have a positive, formidable impact in our communities and throughout our Nation.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.